Transnational History and Integration: The Case of the Yunnan Myth

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Global and transnational approaches have been critiqued for their tendency to chart a past of boundedness to a present of interconnection.[1] As Sebastian Conrad highlights, 'it is difficult…to disentangle global history as a perspective from an assessment of the process of global integration'.[2] Criticisms of such history include the fact that integration – and a desire to be integrated – are assumed, and that this integration is taken to be the convergence of the globe into a single system. This narrative is problematic for its simplistic interpretation of a homogenous progression toward a given end-point. Kris Manjapra denounces the underlying Eurocentrism in the 'ontology of global history as a process of increasing convergence towards structural Westernness, despite local differentiations'.[3] However, Manjapra also highlights the potential for transnational approaches to employ 'an ontology of knowledge that seeks difference, instead of resemblance' and notes the utility of an approach that places emphasis on 'entangled differences'.[4] Similarly, Patricia Clavin argues that transnational histories have the ability to 'decentre, destabilise and disrupt' preconceived notions of integration. She emphasises that a transnational sensitivity 'has brought home how the history of the world, and the process of globalisation, is as much about fragmentation as unity'.[5] Using microhistorical methods, this work seeks to explore how a transnational approach might uncover difference and fragmentation in the history of British imperial exploration in the province of Yunnan across the late nineteenth century. Given the small size of this study, its conclusions are limited. Nevertheless, it does offer an insight into structures operating on a larger scale than the specific object of research. The study finds that an analysis of the 'Yunnan Myth' in this context does allow for nuanced reflection on matters of integration.

The 'Yunnan Myth' refers to a myth fabricated by British imperialists regarding the potential for British trade with the province of Yunnan in the late Qing era. The case for the myth was initially made in an article by Warren Walsh, who stated that it constituted 'the belief that Yunnan was a province of tremendous potential wealth which could be rendered actual by opening the province to European commerce'.[6] As the label of 'myth' suggests, it did not have solid foundations; Walsh proposed that it was a miscalculation or oversight on the part of the British, who ultimately recognised

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[1] F. Cooper, 'What is the Concept of Globalisation Good for? An African Historian's Perspective', *African Affairs*, 100 (2001), p. 191.

[2] S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, 2016), pp. 90-1.

[3] K. Manjapra, 'Transnational Approaches to Global History: A View from the Study of German–Indian Entanglement', *German History,* 32 (2014), p. 277.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

[5] P. Clavin, 'Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts', *European History Quarterly,* 40 (2010), p. 625.

[6] W.B. Walsh, 'The Yunnan Myth'*, The Far Eastern Quarterly,* 2 (1943), p. 273.

that Yunnan lacked the value initially reported. Momentum for trade with the province was subsequently lost. Other histories of the region in the late Qing era have built upon Walsh's idea. Ralph Crozier, for example, makes a similar argument regarding the growing opposition to proposals for a British railway in Yunnan.[7] Wider histories of imperialism in the late-Qing era often overlook British exploration in the province because this did not result in a formalised British presence in the region.[8] More recent overviews on the history of Yunnan, however, have continued to uncritically accept the discourse of the 'Yunnan Myth'. Bin Yang, for instance, draws attention to the fact that 'at the end of the nineteenth century a myth of Yunnan was created by the French and British'.[9] Tim Summers's *Yunnan* also employs the rhetoric of the myth.[10] Continued reference to the myth in these works suggests that it remains the best explanation for the absence of stronger British presence in the region in the late nineteenth century.

Beyond the myth

Yet, an acceptance of the 'Yunnan Myth' discourse should not persist in histories of the province. This regenerates an imperialist discursive framework that is problematic due to its terminology and the history it produces. To refer to the 'Yunnan Myth' in this way is to portray the province and its people as passive bystanders in a history that is being acted upon them. The term follows the rationale that the prosperity of Yunnan was a 'myth', debunked by the British, who then relinquished interest in trading with such a poor province, presumably to the dismay of the locals. The desire of the Yunnanese people to cooperate and trade with the British is assumed, without any attempt to provide demonstrative evidence. This stems from the imperial outlook of the argument, which follows a Western conception of development. With such an ideological underpinning, histories need not question whether economic cooperation and the region's consequent development was of interest to the people of Yunnan. An acceptance of the discourse of the 'Yunnan Myth' results in a lack of critical engagement with the imperial dynamic that underpins this interaction. Walsh's work provides analysis strictly from the perspective of the British, typically relying upon sources produced once imperialists had arrived back in Britain. The only mention of the Yunnanese population in his work is to highlight that they were considered to be poor.[11] Evidently, this framework provides a problematic understanding of British interactions with Yunnan in the late Qing era.

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[7] R.C. Crozier, 'Antecedents of the Burma Road: British Plans for a Burma-China Railway in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 3 (1962), p. 11.
[8] See, for example, R. Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London, 2012).
[9] B. Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds: The Making of Yunnan* (New York, 2009), p. 282.
[10] T. Summers, *Yunnan – A Chinese Bridgehead to Asia: A Case Study of China's Political and Economic Relations with its Neighbours* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 39.
[11] Walsh, 'The Yunnan Myth', p. 276.

This study goes beyond the discourse of the 'Yunnan Myth' to explore the relations between British imperialists and the inhabitants of Yunnan in the 1870s and 1880s. The essay will focus on this time period for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has been suggested that the 'Myth' was most prominent in this era. Secondly, there is a wealth of sources on the topic, which can offer valuable insight into as a period before the more noted British presence in the province from 1902. Writings of the British imperialists who visited Yunnan in this era will be analysed with sensitivity to the context of empire, and the unsuitability of a nation-state framework to explore this history will be highlighted. Although Archibald Colquhoun and Archibald Little were not directly employed by the British state, Colquhoun was a traveller and publicist and Little a merchant resident in Chongqing, they can be labelled 'imperialists' on account of their analysis of the commercial potential of the sites they encountered while exploring. As Mary Louise Pratt has noted, travel and exploration in this manner was an essential aspect of late nineteenth century imperialism.[12] Moreover, research undertaken for this essay was limited by the availability of source materials and language barriers; only digitised sources in English could be accessed. Although it is doubtful that written sources from the perspective of those who interacted with British imperialists exist, their absence could be problematic. The dangers of approaching the research solely from the British perspective are considered throughout the essay and such limitations possibly aid the argument.[13] This study does not benefit from unique access to a wealth of material unavailable to others. On the contrary, the majority of the primary material drawn upon comes from writers cited by Walsh in the 1940s. Just as Clare Anderson and Laura Ann Stoler have underlined, new insights may be gained through the adoption of a transnational perspective when approaching previously-explored archival materials.[14]

In the case of the 'Yunnan Myth', such an approach requires that the Yunnanese be recognised as agents. As Natalie Zemon Davis notes, when decentring transnational histories the colonised must 'be given voice and agency, reacting to Europeans, suffering, resisting, exchanging knowledge and objects, sometimes intimate with Europeans, often ignoring them and going on with their lives'.[15] Further, a transnational perspective calls for a methodology that goes beyond the categorisation of a British-Chinese commercial exchange. The histories regarding the 'Myth' anachronistically refer to an exchange between Britain and 'China' or 'Southwestern China'. This attributes an inaccurate homogeneity to the Qing state, and misrepresents the experiences reflected in the writings of the British who travelled in Yunnan in this period. Finally, an analysis of writing produced in the context

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[12] M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Oxford, 2007).

[13] F.-T. Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire, and Cultural Encounter* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 153.

[14] C. Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge, 2012); A.L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, 2009).

[15] N.Z. Davis, 'Decentring History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World', *History and Theory,* 50 (2011), p. 190.

of this cross-cultural interaction reveals insights beyond the realms of trade. As Fa-Ti Fan contends, 'the mysterious, the unknown, the space devoid of Western presence might actually be some other people's backyard. What was a heroic adventure to the Westerners might be everyday routine to others'.[16] Though the sources were written by the British, they were a product of exposure to Yunnan and its populace. This provided the British imperialists with an intrinsically transnational outlook. Their perspectives and the writings they produced are a reflection of the heterogeneity of the world they encountered.

<div align="center">Resistance to the British</div>

The inclusion of the local population in this history is not simply a case of reinstating agency. Through exploring their suspicion, hostility, and active resistance to the British, it is possible to unveil an account of soured relations that does not tacitly suggest a desire for economic integration. Yunnanese locals resisted and refused to cooperate with the British on both economic and social terms. Archibald Colquhoun first set out for Yunnan in 1881 and repeatedly reported the 'marked animosity of the people towards foreigners'.[17] In his popular account of his journey across Yunnan, *Across Chryse*, Colquhoun describes numerous occasions when the people neglected to trade with him or his party. On arriving at a market in the village of Xiyang, Colquhoun recounts that 'all the Yeou-jens, who were present, fled immediately they saw us approach their quarter of the market'.[18] Alexander Hosie, a part-time botanist of the consular service, described a similar air of hostility on his visits to Yunnan in 1882-4. Hosie noted that 'a Chinese has little to gain by showing civility to a foreigner, be he official, merchant or missionary'.[19] The hostility towards merchants, officials, and missionaries alike highlights local disinterest in establishing commercial relations, and demonstrates that the Yunnanese were far from passive in encounters with the British.

Enmity was more commonly acted out on a social level. Fa-Ti Fan, writing on British naturalists throughout Qing territory, argues that 'curiosity rather than fear or hatred was the more usual reaction of a Chinese local population toward Western strangers'.[20] This account downplays the absence of trust that characterised encounters between locals and imperialists in Yunnan. Colquhoun frequently aroused suspicion. Having attempted to present a gift to the child of an inn-keeper, he recalled that 'the child was hurried away by the old lady, and actually locked up while the mother stood in front of the door'.[21] Colquhoun 'had to explain that [he] had no desire to take away her little one, that it was

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[16] Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China*, p. 123.
[17] A.R. Colquhoun, 'Exploration Through the South China Borderlands, from the Mouth of the Si-Kiang to the Banks of the Irawadi', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, 4 (1882), p. 716.
[18] A.R. Colquhoun, *Across Chryse: Being the Narrative of a Journey of Exploration Through the South China Borderlands, From Canton to Mandalay* (London, 1883), p. 334.
[19] A. Hosie, *Three Years in Western China* (London, 1890), p.48.
[20] Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China,* p. 140.
[21] Colquhoun, *Across Chryse*, p. 350.

not a Western custom to eat children'.[22] This was not an isolated incident – the local population consistently showed a mistrust of the British that amounted to more than curiosity. Suspicion in this manner is unsurprising; these men frequently referenced the fact they were exploring territory in the province that no other European had encountered before them.[23] Edward Baber, also of the consular service, demonstrated the extent of this mistrust throughout his recollections of a journey across Yunnan in the late 1870s. In one instance, Baber enquired about the earrings of a local, whose 'only reply was to spring back and draw a long dagger from his belt'.[24] Mistrust and suspicion, reflecting more than curiosity, prompted the Yunnanese to make such displays of resistance.

The potential for such suspicion to quickly turn to violence was commonplace. Hosie encountered a particularly dramatic instance of this in a village near Dali. The 'gaping and insolent crowd' soon escalated into 'a free fight…between the rioters and my followers'.[25] Hosie ultimately felt forced to draw his revolver which 'quelled the riot for the night, but threats were thrown out of vengeance of the morrow'.[26] Though not always on such an extreme level, resistance to the imperialists was regularly demonstrated through a variety of local tactics. The most typical strategy involved the Yunnanese using their superior knowledge of the locality to their advantage. Fa-Ti Fan highlights that naturalists of this era were often 'at the mercy of their native guides'; this mirrors the experience of imperialists in Yunnan.[27]

Even those closest to – and often directly employed by – the British would choose to exercise resistance. Guides would often refuse to give up the names of local sites or offer incomplete accounts of the characteristics of other minority groups to the frustration of their British employers.[28] Colquhoun's expedition was left in a 'cruel position' on the approach to Yunnan as his head interpreter refused to continue. Consequently, 'the second interpreter and servants refused to proceed'.[29] Although they eventually returned, this behaviour demonstrates the extent to which the imperialists relied upon the native population and the potential for an exploitation of this reliance. Analysing this as a transnational encounter rather than a commercial interaction between two states, it is clear that the Yunnanese actively resisted the imperialists through both violent and non-violent means, despite their limited power. This recognition allows for a more complete explanation of the failure for greater British involvement in Yunnan, and for the rejection of an assumption that the Yunnanese desired further economic integration. On the contrary, the British were commonly met

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 350.
[23] *Ibid.,* p. 344.
[24] E.C. Baber, *Travels and Researches in Western China* (London, 1882), p. 168.
[25] A. Hosie, *Three Years in Western China* (London, 1890), p. 115.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 115.
[27] Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China*, p. 138.
[28] Hosie, *Three Years in Western China*, p. 37; Colquhoun, *Across Chryse*, p. 380.
[29] Colquhoun, 'Exploration Through the South China Borderlands', p. 717.

with disinterest or hostility. Such nuance helps to combat the false teleology of what Cooper refers to as the 'globalisation-paradigm' through recognising that economic integration is not the inherently desired – or actual – historical end-point.[30]

Yunnan and 'China' in the Qing state

Treating this encounter beyond a 'British-Chinese' interaction, as it has been represented, is needed to prevent the anachronistic application of national labels. To uncritically describe this episode as British exploration in 'China' has two significant problems. Firstly, it distorts history and misrepresents the reality of the province. Secondly, as Joshua Fogel notes, it 'serves the interests of the contemporary nation-state…(and) this sort of anachronism is the handmaiden of the nation-state discourse'.[31] These issues are particularly pertinent for any historian writing about China. Such anachronisms are used by the ruling Chinese Communist Party to gain legitimacy in contemporary territorial disputes through appeals to an ancient lineage of a coherent 'China'. The Qing state cannot be accurately conceptualised within this bounded nation-state framework. How best to define the state is a central question in historiography of the late Qing era. As Mullaney highlights, there is an 'ongoing attempt to understand "how the Qing became China"'.[32]

It is thus clear that an uncritical reference to 'China' in this period is problematic. This is particularly true given Yunnan's position on the geographic and political periphery. Qing authority was barely recognised in many areas considered to be ruled by the centre: as Crossley argues, '"China", as framed by the geographical contours of the Qing empire was not in fact united, nor was the government centralised'.[33] In the case of Yunnan, this resulted in a great deal of local autonomy, with little attempt to assimilate the Yunnanese into the political systems of the central Qing authority.[34] The experiences of the British in Yunnan reflected this. Baber recounted the experience of one missionary in Yunnan who had been left to die, and noted that in 'the frontier…at almost any point…Chinese may be hunted for in the manner recounted'.[35] To label Yunnan 'China' in this context is to ascribe a false level of state capacity to the ruling Qing government.

A differentiation between Yunnan and China is one of the most consistent themes in British imperialist accounts of the province. In a passage cited by Walsh, F.S. Bourne – another British consul – stated that 'these non-Chinese races do not buy foreign goods', and noted that 'the only purchasers

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[30] Cooper, 'What is the Concept of Globalisation Good For?', p. 208.

[31] J.A. Fogel, 'Introduction: The Teleology of the Nation-State', in J.A. Fogel (ed.), *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 7.

[32] T. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley, 2010), p. 6.

[33] P.K. Crossley, 'Nationality and Difference in China: The Post-Imperial Dilemma', in J.A. Fogel (ed.), *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 157.

[34] P.C. Perdue, 'Where Do Incorrect Political Ideas Come From? Writing the History of the Qing Empire and the Chinese Nation', in J.A. Fogel (ed.), *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 181.

[35] Baber, *Travels and Researches*, p. 124.

of foreign goods…in these parts are well-to-do Chinese.'[36] He goes on to differentiate between 'the Chinese labourer, or the non-Chinese aboriginal'.[37] Bourne makes this point in light of the greater potential of the 'actual' Chinese for trade, relative to the native Yunnanese population whose predominantly agricultural occupation created the perception that they were less suited to trade with the British. Similar differentiations underpinned Hosie's discussions of economics. He wrote of an unnamed small village, whose 'few inhabitants lacked the busy manner of Chinese citizens', commenting that 'the people of Yunnan are in general notorious for their laziness'.[38] The casual nature of this distinction between Yunnanese and 'Chinese citizens' reflects the extent to which the imperialists' experience of Yunnan reflected the province's position outside central Chinese authority.

Moreover, this observation reveals an interesting – and more commonly noticed – differentiation at the social level. The British were fascinated by the ethnic diversity of Yunnan and set each race they encountered apart from the Chinese. On the Yi, Colquhoun wrote that 'they are a handsome race, superior to the Chinese…living, we were told, on amicable terms with the natives'.[39] Mullaney explains this fascination with ethnic minorities on the part of colonial observers as the result of a 'double, nested alterity': 'constituting the Other to the Chinese, which in turn constituted a global Other in the minds of Euro-American observers'.[40] Although this might suggest that the differentiation between native and Chinese was thought of only in terms of race, such social differentiation was often explicitly linked to a deeper political divide. Hosie, for example, noted that 'the treatment which these aborigines receive at the hands of the Chinese, and the contempt in which they are held by them, have induced a timidity which is hard to overcome'.[41] Similarly, Colquhoun observed that 'the Chinese have been unable to accommodate the ways of the hill people to their own. Their sole idea in treating them is coercion'.[42] This reveals a perception of more than a racial divide between 'China' and Yunnan. It also demonstrates that the Qing state was failing to establish homogenous control over the province and its people; discussion of a British-Chinese interaction therefore misrepresents the experiences of those in Yunnan at this time. In this way, the transnational approach offers insights that better capture the fragmented nature of wider state structures.

<div align="center">Perceptions of 'nation'</div>

These findings also shed light on the process by which the Qing state ultimately became the Chinese nation-state. This has been attributed to the influence of Western ideas – that the notion of 'China' originated from beyond Chinese borders, and that a united, homogenous, 'China' existed in Western

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[36] Walsh, 'Yunnan Myth', p. 275.
[37] *Ibid.,* p. 275.
[38] Hosie, *Three Years in Western China*, p. 182.
[39] Colquhoun, *Across Chryse*, p. 362.
[40] Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*, p. 46.
[41] Hosie, *Three Years in Western China*, p. 226.
[42] Colquhoun, *Across Chryse*, p. 341.

minds long before the emergence of a Chinese nation-state.[43] As Bill Hayton recently asserted, 'in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this pre-eminent "China" travelled from Europe to East and Southeast Asia…they too began to imagine a place called "China", just like the Westerners'.[44] This argument has come under criticism for 'intellectual colonialism' in its framing of the East as a passive recipient. However, the perception of nation among these British imperialists suggests that it might also misrepresent the West.[45] That Western imperialists within China conceived a marked difference between Yunnan and China, and acknowledged the diversity of interaction with the Qing state, suggests that Hayton – and other historians - may have presented an overly homogenous interpretation of Western thought.

Colquhoun's conceptualisation of China further complicates this. He bemoans the static nature of China and refers to the 'petrefaction of the Chinese race': China 'thinks and feels to-day as it did three thousand years ago'.[46] That Colquhoun could simultaneously conceive of China in such static terms, and also conceive of it as a lucid entity without fixed control over its entire territory, is indicative of the shortcomings displayed by unnuanced claims regarding Western perceptions. It also reaffirms the flaws and inaccuracy of analysis within a rigid nation-state framework that does not capture the dynamic ways in which people interacted with the state and ideas of 'nation'. Further research is necessary to uncover whether this outlook was limited to Westerners who visited Qing territories, or perhaps even to those who visited Yunnan. Archibald Little, a British merchant who lived in Chongqing and had never visited Yunnan, wrote of the province in terms that emphasised its 'Chineseness'. He described the 'purity of the language' and referred to the Yunnanese as 'the Chinese'; this could indicate that the transnational outlooks of Colquhoun, Baber, and Hosie were the product of an interaction with the diverse environment of Yunnan.[47] Little's comments strengthen the idea that the nation-state framework is inappropriate for the historical analysis of Qing-era Yunnan. Despite the absence of suitable sources to make a definitive case, such evidence might suggest that the local population would have interacted with the nation in similarly dynamic terms. At the very least, these findings pose questions that cast doubt on a straightforward interpretation of western thought, and that warn against an inadequate recognition of the heterogeneity of experiences and outlooks in Yunnan.

The perception of nation in the writings the imperialists produced was complex, stemming from a foundation that equated ethnolinguistic homogeneity with a legitimate claim to nationhood.

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[43] W.C. Kirby, 'When Did China Become China? Thoughts on the Twentieth Century' in J.A. Fogel (ed.), *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 107.
[44] B. Hayton, *The Invention of China* (Yale, 2020), p. 9.
[45] K. Brown, 'Reinventing China', *Inside Story,* 20 November 2020, <https://insidestory.org.au/reinventing-china/> [accessed 1 December 2020].
[46] Colquhoun, *Across Chryse*, p. 195.
[47] A.J. Little, *Through the Yang-tse Gorges, or, Trade and Travel in Western China*, (London, 1888), p. 303.

Colquhoun, for example, noted that 'the races, although now for the most part welded into one people, are distinguishable…the number of *patois* is great'.[48] Evidently, to Colquhoun, the persistence of patois – or, the absence of a single dominant national language – undermined the forming of 'one people'. In a province as ethnically and linguistically diverse as Yunnan, a perception of nationhood on an ethnolinguistic basis meant that the imperialists saw the province as a number of different 'nations'. To Hosie, there was no issue with the seemingly contradictory notion of 'non-Chinese races of Western China'.[49] An ethnolinguistically homogenous community in Yunnan formed its own 'nation' whilst territorially forming part of a geographical 'China'.

This thought is most explicit in Baber's accounts. He conceived of multiple ethnically defined 'nations'. For example, he stated the term 'Panthay' had gained 'complete recognition as the national name of the Mohammedan revolutionaries in Yunnan'.[50] Baber went further than this, sympathising with the national cause of the Thai people of the city of 'Tu-Shu'. The city was 'inhabited by a people not Chinese, and governed subject to Chinese supervision', which led Baber to the following question: 'Why not allow them to retain their own national designation of "Tai"? They preserve their own manners, costume, language, and alphabetic writing: let them keep their own name'.[51] The Thais were seen as fulfilling an ethnolinguistic criteria, which legitimated claims to national recognition. Baber's 'criteria' is particularly interesting due to the fact that ethnolinguistic nationalism would later become the basis of nation-state building and statehood legitimation in a number of states in East and Southeast Asia. Moreover, Baber's inclusion of script or 'alphabetic writing' as an aspect of legitimation is similarly noteworthy – this became an unique element of statehood legitimation within this region in the twentieth century.[52] Tomasz Kamusella theorises a number of avenues through which this may have been the result of a transfer of ideas from Europe to Southeast Asia.[53] Although disconnected from this later process of statehood legitimation, Baber's perspective on the issue of nationhood in the region provides an example of how European ethnolinguistic nationalism could become the basis of such appeals. Analysis of the writing of British imperialists within their transnational context thus highlights the futility of assigning static conceptions of nation to Yunnan. Influenced by their environment, they thought of 'nation' in dynamic terms, at every turn encountering and acknowledging the heterogeneity and decentralised nature of Yunnan within the Qing state.

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[48] A.R. Colquhoun, *The Opening of China, 6 Letters, Reprinted from the Times* (London, 1884), p. 19.
[49] Hosie, *Three Years in Western China*, pp. 224-5.
[50] Baber, *Travels and Researches*, p. 159.
[51] *Ibid.,* p. 178.
[52] T. Kamusella, 'The Rise and Dynamics of the Normative Isomorphism of Language, Nation, and State in Central Europe', in M.S. Flier and A. Graziosi (eds.), *The Battle for Ukrainian: A Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 443-4.
[53] T. Kamusella, 'Standard Norms in Written Languages: Historical and Comparative Studies Between East and West', in K. Hara and P. Heinrich (eds.), *Standard Norms in Written Languages: Historical and Comparative Studies Between East and West* (Tokyo, 2016), pp. 31-40.

This essay demonstrates that taking a transnational approach can be useful for capturing fragmentation as well as integration. The study is limited by its sources – being primarily grounded in the observations of four British imperialists – and by the micro-scale of the interaction upon which conclusions are drawn. Nonetheless, in drawing on a transnational methodology which treats this as an interaction without the constraint of a nation-state framework, this case study not only provides interesting insight into some wider debates surrounding the late Qing era, but also contributes to an understanding of what had been commonly referred to as the 'Yunnan Myth'. The essay has attempted to highlight the unsuitability of this discursive framework through a demonstration of the local population as active participants in the encounter. Secondly, it has shown the inaccuracy and anachronistic nature of the application of the label 'China'. Finally, through an analysis of the perceptions of the imperialists, it has underlined the perceived dynamism of 'nation' in Yunnan.

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